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# THEA 401: Advanced Acting—Acting for Camera—A Peer Review of Teaching Project Benchmark Portoflio

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# MAKING THE INTANGIBLE TANGIBLE AND THE SUBJECTIVE OBJECTIVE IN TEACHING THEA 401: ADVANCED ACTING— ACTING FOR CAMERA

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*A Peer Review of  
Teaching Project  
Benchmark  
Portfolio*

## **ABSTRACT**

In the pursuit of teaching the art of acting, and specifically acting for the camera, how do we measure growth? Additionally is there a correlation between high academic achievement and talent? In this portfolio we will examine how to evaluate acting, student growth, and examine test and paper results to see if the most “talented” performers are also the highest academic achievers.

**Keywords:** Acting, Acting for Camera, Camera Acting, Performance, On-camera

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## **I. OBJECTIVES OF PEER REVIEW COURSE PORTFOLIO**

### **A. Author's Objectives**

I had a number of goals in engaging with the Peer Review of Teaching Project and the creation of a portfolio. First and foremost is that I am a professor of practice and my primary focus at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln is to teach. Since there have been numerous studies about the lack of effectiveness of course evaluations by students, I am seeking to find another way of documenting my success or effectiveness as a teacher. I am hoping that by using methods such as this, peer evaluation by my tenured colleagues, and course evaluations that my reappointment committee can gain a better and more thorough grasp of my teaching ability and effectiveness.

Secondly I am seeking to discover a better way to analyze progress of a subjective art form such as acting. How do I encourage students to grow as artists and not jump through hoops or check boxes to gain an “A,” and how do I describe to a layperson what good acting is?

Third, I am looking to see if there is any correlation between academic performance on test and papers and what one could consider “acting ability.”

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

The University Bulletin contains the following course description for THEA 401, *“Actor's methods of character development in the major styles of acting including Realistic Drama, Elizabethan, Comedy, Theatre of the Absurd, Musical Theatre, and others, and the acting profession itself. Specific content for each semester may be obtained from the teaching faculty.”*

As set out by the Director of my school Paul Steger and the Head of Acting, Harris Smith I was tasked with making this semester's course of THEA 401 concerning acting for the camera.

### A. Course Goals

My general course objective was to provide students with a working knowledge and experience of playing in front of the camera, auditioning for recorded media, and a deepening of the actor's art and craft.

More specific objectives for the course as laid out in my syllabus (see [Appendix](#)) were the following:

- Demonstrate competency with film, television, & new media terminology.
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of how to work as an actor on a live or “hot” set as a professional
- Demonstrate an understanding of, appreciation for, and basic competency of the “tools” required of an actor in recorded media: truth, imagination, moment-to-moment, commitment, presence, working with the voice & body, and vulnerability.
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of auditioning for various forms of recorded media.

### B. Context

THEA 401: Advanced Acting at present is a series of four courses taught over a two-year cycle. Each semester has a different focus. Acting Shakespeare, Audition Technique, Acting in Period & Style, and Acting for Camera is the four-course sequence that is taught here at The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film laid out by faculty members Paul Steger and Harris Smith.

BA Theatre Students who are a part of the Performance Emphasis must complete three of the four offered THEA 401 courses in order to graduate.

### **C. Enrollment/Demographics**

The THEA 401 sequence of courses is comprised of Junior and Senior Performance Emphasis BA Theatre majors here at The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film. Many of these students are pursuing a second emphasis in Directing & Management. This course was comprised of 12 students: seven women, five men, two seniors, and ten juniors. Of that 12, four are pursuing a double emphasis in Performance and Directing & Management. I find it interesting to note that six of the 12 are out of state students.

In order to reach this sequence of courses students have had to complete previous coursework containing the following THEA 224, THEA 225, THEA 256, or the equivalent and permission. These students have all had to pass through their “Sophomore Assessment” here at The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film. It is a re-audition for the program during their sophomore year during which they can be let go from the program, placed on probation in the program, or place on warning within the program.

This particular group of students was smaller than most due to a large number of seniors who graduated in December. Despite December graduations I still find this number of students to small. It is my opinion that The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film has recruited smaller than average incoming classes for the Performance Emphasis and also has a poor retention rate concerning these students. But that is a subject for another time.

### III. TEACHING METHODS/COURSE MATERIALS/COURSE ACTIVITIES

#### A. Teaching Methods, Course Materials, and Outside Activities Used

I approached this course using a variety of methods. I put together a four-tiered grouping of projects.

Tier One: They were assigned three “academic” projects consisting of a test over terminology we were using over the course of the semester and two papers, each covering a book I assigned them to read. The following is an example of a Paper Rubric:

#### Paper Rubric– Spring 2016

Name:

DATE:

All criteria are measured on a level of 1 through 5.

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4 = Consistently, 5= Always

Or the numbers 1 through 5 measure degrees of compliance with criteria 1 being a minimum of meeting criteria, 5 meeting the criteria with 100% compliance.

- 1.) Paper is well written in regards to sentence structure, clarity of thought and has effective, smooth, and logical transitions in a professional format.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- 2.) Student followed instructions in regards to the delivery of paper to instructor.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- 3.) Student edited for typos and spelling errors and manipulates complex sentences for effect/impact.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- 4.) Student answered the questions that were asked by the instructor in the assignment.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- 5.) Student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the questions posited/answered through the paper.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- 6.) Student demonstrates focused ideas, critical and original thoughts processes, and (if applicable) sites evidence to support ideas, uses vivid and specific examples, and thorough analysis and insight.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---



**Total Points:**

**Specific/Prescriptive Notes on Students Work:**

Tier Two: They had three projects were points were earned simply for completion. One was a Peer & Self Evaluation over scripted scenes, two was auditioning and participating in the Directing for Film student's scene and short film projects, and three was directing a scene in class, which they had to edit together a rough cut as well as participating as crew for everyone else's projects during class. The following is an example of a Peer Evaluation Rubric:

**Peer Evaluation Rubric Rubric – Acting for Camera – Spring 2016**

**YOUR NAME (Will be redacted later):**

**NAME OF STUDENT BEING EVALUATED:**

**DATE:**

All criteria are measured on a level of 1 through 5.

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4 = Consistently, 5= Always

Or the numbers 1 through 5 measure degrees of compliance with criteria 1 being a minimum of meeting criteria, 5 meeting the criteria with 100% compliance.

- 1) Student's work was clearly well memorized (if applicable), exhibited thought, and thorough preparation  
a.    1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 2) Student exhibited clear and actable choices in relation to the text/exercise they were working on and followed the instructors or directors notes and instructions regarding the scene/exercise  
a.    1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 3) Student exhibited a refined sense of being truthful in all imaginary or dramatic circumstances in class  
a.    1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 4) Student received notes, feedback, and critiques graciously & professionally  
a.    1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 5) Student's work exhibited an understanding how to be professional and function on set: including on-set terminology & using the camera to communicate one's work clearly  
a.    1                      2                      3                      4                      5
- 6) Student exhibited an ability to listen & respond from moment to moment either with their partner, "other," or imaginary object.  
a.    1                      2                      3                      4                      5

- 7) Student worked for consistency each time they got up to work: particularly in regards to maintaining what works from each showing/take to the next and works on bringing or working upon something new each showing/take to continue their growth

a. 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Total Points:**

Tier Three: Three “performance” or acting focused projects. One project was two exercises: *Gwyneth Paltrow’s Head in a Box (GPHB)* and *The Scream Test*. The other two projects were scenes of previously written existing material. GPHB’s name is taken from the film *Seven*. If you haven’t seen it, I don’t want to ruin it for you. The exercise centers on opening a box three different times, with three very different things in the box. Each person on each take was given something different. We shoot them from the perspective on inside the box. We watch the takes in playback with the class attempting to deduce what was in the box, for the actor they have to create what’s in the box and respond to it *truthfully*. *Do we, as spectators, believe they are looking at what they are supposed to be seeing?*

The Scream Test is exactly what it sounds like. We watch them react to discovering a monster or something that frightens them, pursues them, and chases them into a corner they can’t escape from. This often results in a blood-curdling scream. Again, their work must always pass the truth test of believability. The following rubric is what I used to evaluation the scenes and the exercises.

**Baseline Rubric – Acting for Camera – Spring 2016**

**NAME OF STUDENT BEING EVALUATED:**

**EXERCISE/PROJECT:**

**DATE:**

All criteria are measured on a level of 1 through 5.

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Consistently, 5 = Always

Or the numbers 1 through 5 measure degrees of compliance with criteria 1 being a minimum of meeting criteria, 5 meeting the criteria with 100% compliance.

- 1) Student’s work was clearly well memorized (if applicable), exhibited thought, and thorough preparation

a. 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

- 2) Student exhibited clear and actable choices in relation to the text/exercise they were working on and followed the instructors or directors notes and instructions regarding the scene/exercise

a. 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

- 3) Student exhibited a refined sense of being truthful in all imaginary or dramatic circumstances in class

a. 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

- 4) Student received notes, feedback, and critiques graciously & professionally

- |    |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
- 5) Student's work exhibited an understanding how to be professional and function on set: including on-set terminology & using the camera to communicate one's work clearly
- |    |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
- 6) Student exhibited an ability to listen & respond from moment to moment either with their partner, "other," or imaginary object.
- |    |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
- 7) Student worked for consistency each time they got up to work: particularly in regards to maintaining what works from each showing/take to the next and works on bringing or working upon something new each showing/take to continue their growth
- |    |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|

**Total Points:**

Tier Four: Three acting or performance focused projects that were *not graded*, but rather worked on for the experience and the learning to be taken from them. The first few weeks they all had to perform a monologue of their choice on camera. Then they had to perform an Open Scene on camera that they prepared asking them to carry out specific requirements, and last was a unit on auditioning for the camera. Since these were three very new skills for them I wanted to them to have the freedom of failure and to learn from failure without harming their grade. An Open Scene is a scene with no punctuation, context, or characters. The actors must create everything about the scene themselves. The following is the Open Scene and the instructions:

OPEN SCENE C

So	<u>A</u>
So	<u>B</u>
Where have you been	<u>A</u>
Out	<u>B</u>
Out	<u>A</u>
I don't deserve this	<u>B</u>
Oh I can't do this anymore	<u>A</u>
Is that what you want	<u>B</u>

Instructions:

For Monday & Wednesday - craft a relationship of WHO, WHAT and WHERE.

You will shoot the scene at a table.

You both must also, eat, drink, or deal with an object in the scene.

Please have an objective crafted for the scene.

## **B. Rationale for Teaching Methods**

The creation of the four tiers was to serve several goals.

Tier One was created so we had a hard “academic” component in the class. The test and two papers taught the new language these students had to learn. Theatre and film speak two very different languages and terms, and for the most part, none of these students had encountered this language or terminology before. This also allowed me to see if there is any correlation between acting well and high academic achievement.

Tier Two was created to teach them about evaluating each other and working with peers. Peer Evaluation is frequently not encouraged in most actor training models. In fact it is discouraged. The entire model behind teaching acting for the camera centers on being able to watch oneself in playback. With theatre we are unable to do this. Hence why I feel Peer Evaluation and Self Evaluation must be an integral part of on-camera training. How others perceive you and how you perceive yourself are things that every student of acting must learn to reconcile. The amazing thing with on-camera is that you can go back and watch the work again and again. It leaves little margin for misinterpretation. I also wanted them to learn perspective. By having the students crew, direct, and edit each other’s work they quickly learned that the actor is often times a tool of the film, and is often the smallest piece of a working film or television set. Being on the other end of the camera reinforced how to conduct themselves on set and what their crew and directors need from them. Having them audition and work with directing students in the film department increased their time in front of the camera and the ability to work with their peers. It also created an opportunity for them to grow and experiment without the pressure of earning a grade for performing.

Three taught them the actual logistics and demands of working on a variety of sets and situations. GPHB and The Scream Test taught them to produce work on demand often with little context of knowledge of what they are reacting to. Working in this fashion has increased with the advent of Green Screen and Digital Technology. Frequently actors are working with tennis balls on the ends of sticks or paper plates taped to sticks for eye line and the monster or character they are acting with hasn’t even been created or imagined yet. They also then worked with a dramatic scene and a comedic scene from existing TV and film properties.

Scripts worked on were from *Pretty Little Liars*, *West Wing*, *Scrubs*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Brides Maids*, *Big Bang Theory*, *Happy Endings*, and *The Faculty*.

Tier Four was to allow them room to grow and fail. I am often dismayed how acting is taught. Either no grade is ever assigned until the final grade of the semester and the student has no idea how they are doing, or everything is graded. Both discourage freedom and growth. Acting is an art and a craft. It must be practiced and much about it is left open to interpretation. The monologue was to give them and myself a baseline for their work and as a reference point for how far they had come in this process for those reasons we recorded the monologues the very first day. The open scene was to allow them to learn certain skills pertaining to matching from take to take without worry about a lot of lines or character work. The auditioning portion, where we used TV sides and commercial copy, was simply to give them a clear idea of expectation and situations for on-camera auditions.

### **C. Illustration of Changes from Pervious Years/Sections**

I wish I was not a first year teacher and instead had taught this course at UNL previously, but I have not and I am in my first year teaching here. I have no examples or context for how this course was taught in the past. It was last taught two years ago and to my knowledge that instructor is no longer working for UNL. In the past I taught Acting for Camera very differently. At Virginia Commonwealth University the class met twice a week in four hour blocks so were able to actually shoot scenes on locations. We also had graduate students who served as teaching assistants so data management, on-set supervision, and distribution of dailies was handled very differently. Unfortunately at this time I have neither context, nor knowledge of how this class was taught differently other than the technology used. I used a DSL camera and recorded audio separately in an attempt to make the course feel like an actual film or TV set.

#### **IV. THE COURSE AND THE BROADER CURRICULLUM**

##### **A. How this Course Fits with Others in the Department and the University**

This course fits within The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film by serving as part of a Performance Emphasis student's final two years of study. Being a school of theatre and film this type of work fits within our larger scope and mission. It provides actors the ability and knowledge to undertake a higher-level work within the program in student and faculty films.

This course directly impacts a student's ability to work as a professional, pay back their student loans, and earn a living as performer. Since 1999 work in the American theatre has declined due to smaller casts, co-productions, and theatre closing their doors. Work in recorded media such film, commercials, new media, and the explosive growth of TV in scripted content through cable, network, and online distributors such as Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu has increased the amount of on-camera work ten times over since 1999. Everyone has jumped onto the original content and programming costs due to the expense of buying content from other providers. Creators find grater freedom in cable and new media and are willing to work there for lower, yet livable wages.

Additionally theatre is traditionally cast nationally out of New York City, while film, TV, commercials, and new media production has it feet planted firmly in two coasts, Los Angeles, CA and New York City, NY and has made powerful secondary markets in tax incentive rich areas such as Atlanta, GA, New Orleans, LA, and tertiary markets in Chicago, IL, Pittsburgh, PA, Richmond, VA, Washington D.C./Baltimore, MD, Cleveland, OH, Portland, OR, Austin, TX, and Albuquerque, NM.

#### **V. ANALYSIS OF STUDENT LEARNING**

##### **A. Analysis of Particular Students and Assignments**

To give one a better idea of assignments and student growth I have put together a series of video compilations from the course to better serve this portfolio and the points it contains. On the first day I had the students perform monologues to serve as a baseline for the rest of the semester. The following selection of monologues is where some of the students stood on day one of the course.

**Day One Monologues** (Click image below to view)



If you look at the first actor they are what I would consider a low performer. I have enclosed the following rubric that I developed during the course in an effort to better evaluate performance work in class. I also developed it as a way of describing what I am looking for to you the reader, or someone who has little-to-no connection to acting. As you can see I am moving away from a bare bones numeric rubric to this:

CRITERIA	LOW Performer	MEDIUM Performer	HIGH Performer
Comfort & ease in front of the camera	Doesn't breathe when working, seems confused at times, displays visible signs of nervousness and an unhealthy self awareness. Working in front of the camera is not fun for this individual.	Occasionally doesn't breathe. Holds some tension. Can let go and have some fun when working. Takes some joy in working/acting.	Breathes, has a continuing sense of ease about their work. Has fun and plays on set. Takes joy in the work. Is excited to be working in front of the camera.
Truth & believability	Lines sound "clunky." Doesn't actually ask their questions or make their points. You don't believe they are in the situation dictated by the script, you don't believe their emotions, you don't believe they are talking to someone. You don't believe they are who they claim to be and are the situation they are in. Inability to commit to the dramatic circumstances they are asked to play.	Asks questions with the text and makes their points. You believe the: who, what, and where of the script when they are acting MOST of the time. The viewer believes the actor most of the time in the situations they are in. Emotions are sometimes "forced." Has done their actor homework on the script and analyzed it so they have a sense of beats, moments and has made choices. Sometimes commits to the dramatic situation they are in.	Always asks the questions and makes the points of the dialogue/script. Dialogue sound correct and effortless NOT clunky or disjointed. You believe everything they are doing and who they say they are. All emotions are truthful and Believable. Has analyzed the script and made choices. Always commits.

On set skills	Turns away from the camera, can't replicate physical life from one take to the next (matching), Can't find their mark. Inability to step into frame. Looks directly into the lens. Can't remember blocking.	Occasionally uses of the off-camera eye. Can match movement and physical action MOST of the time. Can find their mark MOST of the time. Can step into frame. Only looks directly into the lens by accident.	Always uses the camera position to its greatest potential. Always matches movement and physical life on camera from take to take. Always finds their mark and can swing and step into frame with proficiency.
Professionalism	Poor to no memorization of lines. Rude to others. Makes jokes at other's expense. Late to class/set. Unsupportive in the working environment through being on their phone, etc. Short tempered. Doesn't follow or take direction well.	Lines are memorized with occasional flubs/corrections. Pleasant to be around. Rarely late to class/set. Takes notes (writes them down) and attempts to implement them and has success MOST of the time doing so. Supportive of colleagues in their work and attentive to the task at hand and those around them.	Memorized word perfect. Pleasant to be around. Never late to class/set. Always writes down notes (if appropriate) and implements them right away. Supportive of others and attentive to the task at hand and others.

If I had to categorize each of these performers it would be:

Actor A: Low Performer

Actor B Low to Mid Performer

Actor C: Low to Mid Performer

Actor D: Mid to High Performer

Actor E: Mid Performer

Early on in the course we also engaged in the exercise GPHB. Here is a link to two students performing the exercise, without sound, as I was talking them through the exercise. You can see again, how Student A is again a low performer, while I would make the case with this rubric that the second student, Student F is a High Performer.

**GPHB** (Click image below to view)





The next scene was one of the very first scenes we filmed in class. There was a student director and crew and the student director also had to put together a very rough cut that you will see here. Student C and Student E are both featured in this scene.

**UNL Acting for Camera Scene 1** (Click image below to view)



I would rate both students as solid Mid to High Performers in this scene.

To give one a sense of where one student in particular ended up take a look at this scene:

**Final Scene from a Popular Sitcom** (Click image below to view)



Student D maintained her usual high level of work, Student E found a much greater sense of play and ease with the work, but Student B is where the real growth occurred. More truthful, a grater sense of work, and he really played, had fun and left himself alone which resulted in a performance that easy to watch, fun to work with and had solid choices which were appropriate for the script.

Now let's look at "academic" and solidly testable assignments in comparison to where they began and ended as "performers."

Student Level	Starting Level	Test	Paper One	Paper Two	End
A	Low	27	26	15	Low
B	Low to Mid	30	22	30	High
C	Low to Mid	36	30	30	High
D	Mid to High	32	14	30	High
E	Mid	27	28	30	High
F	Mid	34	25	30	High
G	Low	0	29	30	Low
H	Low to Mid	24	0	30	High
I	Mid	33	23	30	High
J	Mid	34	24	30	High
K	Low	36	30	30	High
L	Mid	32	29	30	High

Student G was a disappointment. He started as a Low Performer, ended as a Low Performer, missed the test, and if I hadn't become "flexible" regarding my lateness and attendance policy, he would have failed the course. I have chosen not to include clips of his work in case the student in question watches and read this portfolio. It would be damaging to this student to see their poor performance discussed in a public forum. Student A, on the other hand, has a healthy approach to things and is fine with others dissecting his work.

After looking at all of the data the very few trends presented themselves other than, the students greatly improved as we went along. In regards to a tangible connection between academics and performance ability, the jury is still out. I would like to track this data throughout all of my classes next year to see if a clear correlation occurs. One might make the statement that a Low Performer with poor academic grades has a less likely chance to improve as two of the four starting Low Performers, stayed Low Performers and also had the lowest "academic" success of the Low Performers.

## VI. PLANNED CHANGES

### A. Description of Planned Changes to the Syllabus, Delivery Method, Etc.

If I have the opportunity to teach this course again, I am going to ask for server space and place all of the dailies, sound and video files there in an effort to share them with the entire class. One obstacle we faced was how to share all of the footage we shot with everyone. We did have viewing days, but a few students missed a few items.

This is also a course that necessitates a teaching assistant in order to handle all of the data management. I spent entirely too much time moving files and data around rather than focusing on my teaching and the students. Because we are shooting a different scene or exercise every class the prep time is huge, and assistance is necessary.

The biggest change in my teaching is going to be with my rubrics. The current model of rubric I use is one that I adopted while teaching at Rutgers University/Mason Gross School of the Arts. It was the rubric we were asked to use for consistency across all courses. While it has served me as a teacher at various institutions I feel it is a detriment to my students at UNL. A great number of this current generation are attempting to do what it takes to get an “A” rather than work to grow as an artist and embrace failure and mistakes. They are focused on getting it “right.” Or think thinking that there is a “right” answer to artistic questions.

After fashioning the Low/Medium/High performer rubric for this course I now moving to that model for all courses. Instead of grading specific projects I will monitor them from the warm-up at the start of class and all of their work and hand out a rubric every 3-4 weeks so they can be kept abreast of their progress. An example of the general rubric I am going to use is included below.

Criteria	LOW PERFORMER	MID PERFORMER	HIGH PERFORMER
1. Comfort & Ease working in class and on stage.	Doesn't breathe when working, seems confused at times, displays visible signs of nervousness and an unhealthy self awareness. Working in front of the class and on stage is not fun for this individual. No sense of public privacy. Afraid to take risks in class. No or little sense of ease in their work.	Occasionally doesn't breathe. Holds some tension. Can let go and have some fun when working. Takes some joy in working/acting. Has a sense of public privacy with occasional lapses. Sometimes takes risks in front of the group/class/rehearsal. Some sense of ease in their work.	Breathes, has a continuous sense of ease about their work. Has fun and plays on set. Takes joy in the work. Is excited to be working in front of the class and on stage. Has a complete and total commitment to public privacy. Freely takes risks within the rehearsal and/or working environment.

2. Truth & Believability	Lines sound “clunky.” Doesn’t actually ask their questions or make their points. You don’t believe they are in the situation dictated by the script or exercise. You don’t believe their emotions. You don’t believe they are talking to someone. You don’t believe they are who they claim to be and are in situation the script/exercise dictates. Inability to commit to the dramatic circumstances they are asked to play.	Asks questions with the text and makes their points. You believe the: who, what, and where of the script when they are acting MOST of the time. The viewer believes the actor most of the time in the situations they are in. Emotions are sometimes “forced.” Has done their actor homework on the script and analyzed it so they have a sense of beats, moments and has made choices. Sometimes commits to the dramatic situation they are in.	Always asks the questions and makes the points of the dialogue/script. Dialogue sound correct and effortless NOT clunky or disjointed. You believe everything they are doing and who they say they are. All emotions are truthful and Believable. Has analyzed the script and made choices. Always commits. High investment level in the Given Circumstances of the text/exercise/improvisation.
3. Impulses, Listening & Responding	No sense of connection to their partner or “other.” Isn’t actually talking to or listening to anyone or thing. Doesn’t take in stimuli or their partner. Has no inspiration or impulses, or if they do, doesn’t realize they have them. Has no relationship with their environment, partner, or circumstances.	Connected to their partner or “other”. If not connected than strives to make a connection. Works towards listening and responding with everyone and everything. Works to take in stimuli. Has impulses and inspiration and attempts to act on it. Always considers their relationships with their partner, environment, and space.	Always bases what they are doing next off what their partner or imaginary “other” is doing. Takes nothing for granted with their partner or “other.” Never stifles impulses or inspiration and pursues such inspiration and impulses. Says yes to stimuli from their imagination and their partner. Strong relationships and connection with their partner, environment and circumstances.
4. Professionalism	Poor to no memorization of lines. Rude to others. Makes jokes at other’s expense. Late to class/set. Unsupportive in the working environment through being on their phone, etc. Short tempered. Doesn’t follow or take direction well. Doesn’t or rarely takes notes. Gossips about class. Detracts from the ensemble. Only concerned with themselves and not the work at hand.	Lines are memorized with occasional flubs/corrections. Pleasant to be around. Rarely late to class/set. Supportive of colleagues in their work and attentive to the task at hand and those around them. Never gossips about the class and classmates and doesn’t support those who do. Writes down most of their notes given in class and in rehearsal.	Memorized word perfect. Pleasant to be around. Never late to class/set. Always writes down notes (if appropriate) and implements them right away. Supportive of others and attentive to the task at hand and others. Doesn’t gossip. Contributes to the ensemble. Writes down all of their notes so they can refer to them.

5. Rehearsal Skills	Has issues following instructions for each exercise and improvisation. Inconsistent from one class to the next. Inability to make choices. Works to get an "A" rather than learn or grow as an artist. Work feels unrehearsed, unprepared, and not worked upon. Doesn't look over notes or looks them over right before performing. Tough to schedule rehearsals with as a partner. Argues notes and feedback. Makes excuse for everything. Argues with instructor or director.	Does well with instructions. Works to maintain consistency and previous growth while making new choices. Works to improve as an artist rather than get an "A." Most class work has the appearance of being rehearsed, prepared, and worked upon. Takes notes (after writing them down) and attempts to implement written and verbal notes, and has success MOST of the time doing so. Takes notes and feedback mostly with grace and openness. Doesn't argue or make excuses for notes and feedback.	Follows instructions for each exercise and improvisation. Always maintains consistency and previous growth while making new choices. Improves as an artist rather than get an "A." All class work has the appearance of being rehearsed, prepared, and work upon. Looks over their notes and implements them in rehearsal before bringing in work to share. Always accepts notes and feedback graciously without making excuses. Owns their own work and takes responsibility for their work.
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I suspect there will be much resistance to this new rubric. I frequently have students who will argue grades and want to know what they need to do to get an "A." They are afraid to make mistakes or be bold with their work. The coursework is simply a means to an end. Since The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film is a program that requires an audition for admission and they have to re-audition to continue, I thought this attitude towards grades would not be present. Alas, it is. One of my goals as I move forward is to ease them away from this mindset.

## **VII. SUMMARY AND OVERALL ASSESMENT OF PORTFOLIO PROCESS**

### **A. Description of What the Author Learned Through the Portfolio Process**

I am very grateful for the opportunity this portfolio provided to take a close look at my teaching and at this specific course. Acting for the camera has been the largest portion of my teaching career and responsibilities.

Part of what makes this acting class different from all of the other acting classes is that the students themselves can see tangible growth. I was very pleased with how much growth occurred and it was all documented. It's more than what a teacher can ask for.

The biggest take away was learning how to describe acting in a way the reader could follow. The new rubric I created is a direct result of having to discuss what I do and how I do it. I am grateful for that discovery and I hope it serves me moving forward.

## VII. APPENDIX: SYLLABUS

### THEA 401 -150/151

#### Advanced Acting: Acting for the Camera

**Class:** 8645, 8646 **Section:** 150- LEC Regular, 151 -LAB Regular

Spring 2016

#### Class Meeting Times:

Mondays

10:30AM-11:20AM

Wednesdays & Fridays

10:30AM-12:20PM

**Location(s):** Black Box Theatre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Lab Space), we also have 301/302 next door. But we meet in the Black Box Space.

**Instructor:** Wesley Broulik

**Office Hours:** T/TH 12:00noon-1:45pm or by appointment

**Office:** Temple 210

**Office Phone:** 402-472-2496

**School Email:** (Preferred method of contact) [wbroulik2@unl.edu](mailto:wbroulik2@unl.edu)

### 1. Course Description:

**Per University Bulletin:** *Actor's methods of character development in the major styles of acting including Realistic Drama, Elizabethan, Comedy, Theatre of the Absurd, Musical Theatre, and others, and the acting profession itself. Specific content for each semester may be obtained from the teaching faculty.*

### 2. Required Texts and Plays:

The Camera Smart Actor by Richard Brestoff

ISBN 1-880399-76-8

Making Movies by Sidney Lumet

ISBN 0-679-75660-4

*As well as any scripts for film or TV that we are working from and will be emailed out.*

***Know that often times in the industry scripts are sent out with little to no advance notice. The same may be true in this course. Scenes may be sent out the night before you shoot it in class and you will be expected to have read the script and be memorized for your scene(s)***

***We MAY shoot some scenes on location. That means you will be required to attend class at that off-campus location. You will be expected to be on time. Each student will be required to audition for the Directing for Film course for a short scene and for their short films.***

**Reading and another assignments as well as due dates will be given in class verbally and/or via email over Black Board.**

### 3. General Course Objectives:

Provide students with a working knowledge and experience of playing in front of the camera, auditioning in front for recorded media, and a deepening of the actor's art and craft.

**4. Specific Objectives. At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:**

Demonstrate competency with film, television, & new media terminology.

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of how to work as an actor on a live or "hot" set as a professional

Demonstrate an understanding of, appreciation for, and basic competency of the "tools" required of an actor in recorded media. (truth, imagination, moment-to-moment, commitment, presence, working with the voice & body, vulnerability)

Demonstrate a basic understanding of auditioning for various forms of recorded media.

**5. Major Topics. Major topics to be studied include:**

- a. On-set language and terminology
- b. On-camera auditions
- c. Working with peers in a collegial and professional manner
- d. Best practices for auditions and working on set
- e. Audition approaches for commercials, film, and television
- f. How directing and editing can shape your understanding of acting.
- g. How the camera requires a refined sense of truth in imaginary circumstances.

**6. Instruction Methods and Techniques. Methods and techniques to be used throughout the course include:**

- a. In-class exercises, improvisations, games, and creative projects designed to hone the practical and artistic skills of the actor.
- b. Rehearsed (outside of class) and prepared for presentation exercises and creative projects.
- c. Rehearsed, memorized, and prepared out side of class monologues and scenes.
- d. Possible work within the Directing for film students in their course.
- e. Quizzes
- f. Group projects
- g. Tests
- h. Papers
- i. Verbal adjustments and side coaching while students are actively working in class.
- j. Verbal and written feedback during the class and at various points in the semester. Some feedback may be provided via written rubric.
- k. Peer and self evaluation
- l. Various on-camera and recorded media projects



7. **Requirements and Assignments for the Course. Assignments for the course will include:** Each Assignment will function just like a quiz; if you are not in class when the assignment is due, you won't receive credit. Reading will be assigned on a daily basis, depending on the progression of the class and the subject matter the instructor feels is pertinent at the time.

This instructor does not accept late work.

All students are expected to use Black Board. Per university policy you are to maintain updated contact and email information. BE ADVISED, Google products (Chrome) do not work well with blackboard. Use another browser. This is the responsibility of the student, not the instructor. If you use a Chromebook, there are computing labs all across campus for you to use.

**Class Attire:**

*You will dress appropriately for the character or situation we are working with in class each session or project.*

*You will provide and bring any props that you may need for your scenes and exercises.*

**Note Taking:**

Notes are to be taken on paper and with a writing utensil – not on your phone, ipad, or computer.

**Scene & Monologue Work Expectations:**

All work is to be memorized and rehearsed. If it is not, you will be given a zero for that grade.

**How to absorb and receive feedback on one's work in class:**

The instructor may give verbal side coaching during a scene, monologue, exercise, or improvisation – please stay in the moment with your partner, stay engaged with the work, and implement the coaching as it is given.

Please do not get frustrated if some moments are worked in minutia with a great deal of starting and stopping, repeating a moment, and working moment-to-moment. Some work sessions you may never reach the end of your scene. That is okay.

Due to the personal nature of our work, feedback and instruction can sometimes feel as if it is about us as people rather than the work that is presented at that movement. Make habit the very important skill of separating feedback and criticism of one's art from how one reflects upon oneself.

Practice empathy with everyone.

Tolerate other people's processes.

Celebrate other people's successes.

All growth takes effort.

**8. Evaluation. Evaluation is to be based on the following:**

Three Truth's & A lie, Gwyneth's Head in Box, Serial Killer or Alien?, Monologue(s)	35 pts.
In-Class On-camera Auditioning Unit	35 pts.
Directing Class Audition, Scene, & Film	30 pts.
Film Terminology Quiz	40 pts
Camera Smart Actor Paper	30 pts.
Making Movies Paper	30 pts.
In class scenes from various scripts – 2 scenes X 30 pts each	70 pts.
Directing for camera & assisting on shoots	30 pts.
Peer Evaluation & Self Evaluation	35 pts.
At various time throughout the semester you will be asked to articulately review your colleague's work in class as well as your own work in class.	
Industry News & Best Practices	30 pts.
The last day of class every week we discuss entertainment news, happenings, trends etc. Students are expected to read Backstage, The Hollywood Reporter, Broadway World, Variety, Howlround, American Theatre, Deadline Hollywood, and other periodicals/news source to stay abreast of industry trends, best practices, and news. I suggest using a news aggregator such as Feedly (which is free) to manage content in an app on your phone. I also use Twitter to manage industry content. Having something to say multiple times over the semester will get you points.	

	Total
points possible	365

**10.) Grading breakdown:**

Letter Grade	Percentage (Will be calculated by dividing accumulated points by total points possible)
A+	100-97
A	96.9-93
A-	92.9-90
B+	89.9-87
B	86.9-83
B-	82.9-80

C+	79.9-77
C	76.9-73
C-	72.9-70
D+	69.9 – 67
D	66.9-63
D-	62.9-60
F	Below 60

## **12. Attendance Policy: The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film Attendance Policy (copied from the School Bylaws; revised 2005)**

After a student misses two classes, each subsequent missed class will result in the reduction of the final grade by a full letter grade (i.e., A to B, B- to C-).

**In Professor Broulik's classes students may use two absences. They are yours to use. There are no excused or unexcused absences. If there is work due the day you are absent, then you will receive a zero if you are not present. Not being present is not an excuse as there is no late work.**

**You are expected to schedule doctor's appointments, family events, and work events around our class times.**

**In exceptional circumstances students may be granted an additional absence, at the instructor's discretion, to allow those students to participate in extra-curricular events representing the University. In such cases, the instructor must be notified in advance. Your two absences will be used first towards any commitments. Then permission must be asked**

*If you need to enter or exit the room for any reason, please ask permission to do and you must do it in a manner that does not distract from the students working. Please step out between scenes or during notes. Also, never walk in front of the director or instructor while they are working.*

## **13. Additional Notes:**

This course may include physical contact with the professor and fellow students during scene work and class exercises.

**Trigger and Adult Content Warning** - some scenes and required reading may contain adult language and content. See me immediately if you have concerns regarding these issues.

Regarding props etc., for scenes and exercise work -students are expected to bring to class and rehearse with outside of class appropriate rehearsal props and costumes. No exceptions.

Students are expected to perform all scripted work memorized unless otherwise directed the instructor, no exceptions.

Cellphone and electronic use is not permitted in the classroom. If a student is found on their phone during class time they will be asked to leave and counted absent.

**If a student's phone rings during class or work time for any reason, that person will then be responsible for bringing donuts to the next class, no exceptions.**

If a student engages in any unethical or disruptive behavior during class they will be asked to leave and counted absent. What constitutes said behavior is up to the discretion of the instructor at that moment in time. For example: Excessive talking while others are working or when the instructor is speaking, or making derisive comments about one's classmates while in the class.

#### **14. Services for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the director for SSD for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodations. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

**15. Academic Honesty (copied from UNL Academic Student Handbook 2006).** *Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. To further serve this end, the University supports a Student Code of Conduct which addresses the issue of academic dishonesty. (See the Undergraduate or Graduate Studies Bulletin for complete text.) In accordance with the established procedures as described in the Code, students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.*

*Any questions regarding the procedures for handling incidents of academic dishonesty may be directed to the Director of Student Judicial Affairs, 106 Canfield Administration Building (0418), 472-2021, who is primarily responsible for administering the Student Code of Conduct.*

*In addition to currently established procedures, the Academic Senate has passed a resolution which does, in proven cases of academic dishonesty, prevent a student from dropping the course during the semester. If the student has already dropped the course, the instructor has the right to add the name of the student back to the Final Grade Roster and give the student an appropriate grade.*

#### **Class Schedule**

(Assignments and due dates are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor due to the needs and pace of the class as a whole.)

\*Due to time and pacing needs of the class, assignments or exercise listed may be dropped from the course and the total number of points will be adjusted accordingly.

#### **JANUARY**

**Week One**

01/11/2016 Monday, Class #1  
Read over syllabus

01/15/2016 Wednesday, Class #2

01/13/2016 Friday, Class #3

**Week Two**

01/18/2016 Monday  
Martin Luther King Day – No class

01/20/2016 Wednesday Class #4  
STUDENTS AT KCACTF – Wesley will meet and offer private coaching during class time for those students who are not attending KCACTF

01/22/2016 Friday Class #5  
STUDENTS AT KCACTF – Wesley will meet and offer private coaching during class time for those students who are not attending KCACTF

**Week Three**

01/25/2016 Monday Class #6  
Quiz over Terminology Glossary & Camera Shots. It will cover a variety of formats in order to demonstrate competency on terminology.

01/27/2016 Wednesday Class #7  
NO CLASS. PROFESSOR BROULIK RECRUITING FOR THE JCSTF AT TEXAS EDUCATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION IN DALLAS TEXAS

01/29/2016 Friday Class #8  
NO CLASS. PROFESSOR BROULIK RECRUITING FOR THE JCSTF AT TEXAS EDUCATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION IN DALLAS TEXAS

**Week Four****FEBRUARY**

02/01/2016 Monday, Class #9

02/03/2016 Wednesday, Class #10

02/05/2016 Friday, Class #11

**Week Five**

02/08/2016 Monday, Class #12  
CAMERA SMART ACTOR PAPER DUE  
No less than 750 words on your preconceived ideas about working in front of the camera versus what the book details, as well as what you have learned in class thus far. Answer the following three questions, what surprised you? What intrigued you? And what disturbed

you (if anything did) in regards to the book. How has the camera changed or evolved how you work as an actor and why? And if it hasn't why hasn't it.

They must be emailed to me by 8 am and hard copies, stapled, with your name on them must be given to me at the start of class or you will receive no credit on the paper. No exceptions. No late work.

02/10/2016 Wednesday, Class #13

02/12/2016 Friday, Class #14

### **Week Six**

02/15/2016 Monday, Class #15

02/17/2016 Wednesday, Class #16

02/19/2016 Friday, Class #17

### **Week Seven**

02/22/2016 Monday, Class #18

02/24/2015 Wednesday, Class #19  
Directing Class Auditions

02/26/2016 Friday, Class #20 BLYTHE TECH BEGINS

### **Week Eight**

02/29/2016 Monday, Class #21

### **MARCH**

03/02/2016 Wednesday, Class #22

03/04/2016 Friday, Class #23, BLYTHE OPEN?

### **Week Nine**

03/07/2016 Monday, Class #24

03/09/2016 Wednesday, Class #25

03/11/2016 Friday, Class #26

### **Week Ten**

03/14/2016 Monday, Class #27

03/16/2015 Wednesday, Class #28  
Directing for film Final film auditions

03/18/2015 Friday, Class #29

SPRING BREAK BEGINS

**Week Eleven**

03/21/2016 Monday, NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

03/23/2016 Wednesday, NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

03/25/2015 Friday, NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

SPRING BREAK ENDS – REHEARSALS CAN BEGIN AGAIN ON SUNDAY

**Week Twelve**

03/28/2016 Monday, Class #30

Making Movies papers due. No less than 750 words on what you learned from this book, answering the questions what surprised, intrigued, and disturbed you. How (if at all) has reading this book changed how you will work as an actor? (If not, why not.)

They must be emailed to me by 8 am and hard copies, stapled, with your name on them must be given to me at the start of class or you will receive no credit on the paper. No exceptions. No late work.

03/30/2016 Wednesday, Class #31

**APRIL**

04/01/2016 Friday, Class #32 SKM TECH BEGINS

**Week Thirteen**

04/04/2016 Monday, Class #33

04/06/2016 Wednesday, Class #34 SKM PREVIEW

SKM OPENS 04/07/2016 THURSDAY

04/08/2016 Friday, Class #35

**Week Fourteen**

04/11/2016 Monday, Class #36

04/13/2016 Wednesday, Class #37

04/15/2015 Friday, Class #38

SKM Closes on Saturday Matinee, 04/16/2016

**Week Fifteen**

04/18/2016 Monday, Class #39

04/20/2016 Wednesday, Class #40

04/22/2016 Friday, Class #41

**Week Sixteen**

04/25/2016 Monday, Class #42

04/27/2017 Wednesday, Class #43

04/29/2016 Friday, Class #44 Last day of our class

FINALS WEEK BEGINS Monday 05/02/2016 – Friday 05/06/2016

**FINAL EXAM TIME:**

Friday May 6th 2016 7:30 AM-9:30 AM

Do not make travel plans or medical plans until after our final exam time. No excuses, no exceptions. You must plan to be here.